

SUCCESS GUARANTEED! A photo of every recipe

Cuisine[®] at home

Issue No.74 April 2009

Spring-Perfect Desserts

Rhubarb Crisp, Carrot Cake, and Chocolate Soufflé

Best Sunday Dinner!

Roast Chicken
with **Crispy**
Potatoes

Weeknight
Meals: Ready
in 30 minutes

Pasta Alfredo
with half the calories

Vegetarian for Everyone
Eggs Benedict, Burritos, Risotto



Rhubarb-Apple Crisp
page 42

The magazine business is one I love.

There's a wonderful sense of teamwork putting together each new issue. The editors, Test Kitchen staff, and designers brainstorm, plan, and finally create the recipes, photos, and words that appear in print. Because each issue requires months of production, we work "out of season." While the magazine you're holding showcases springlike pictures and produce, we actually started work on it last fall. Yes, I love creating magazines despite the screwy way we must approach the seasons.

I've been in the magazine business for more years than I care to admit. OK, 30 years. During my food editorial career with national publications, I've traveled from Maine to Washington, always tasting the regional cuisine along the way. Each locale claims a culinary specialty, and that's inspired one of our new features, Local Dish (see page 50). If you're a crab cake lover, you'll love this month's Local Dish, Baltimore Crab Fluffs. It was a tough job, but the *Cuisine* staff sampled these light and crisp morsels in our Test Kitchen numerous times to make sure our recipe tastes like the real thing. They're great party food for spring gatherings.

If you're looking for more seasonal dishes from *Cuisine*, consider signing up for our free eRecipes (CuisineRecipes.com). This weekly e-mail newsletter delivers several recipes to your inbox. With the Internet, the *Cuisine* staff needn't plan months ahead; we can create eRecipes the same week it's delivered to you. We hope you take advantage of this wonderful way to enjoy more *Cuisine at home* recipes that are ideally suited to each season. Happy Spring!

joy@CuisineAtHome.com

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April 2009

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roll with it!

Who can resist homemade yeast rolls straight from the oven? Not the editors in our Test Kitchen. We think these rolls are perfect for dinner. They've become a favorite because of their light, fluffy texture and buttery flavor. In the extremely unlikely event that you end up with any leftovers, they're just as yummy for breakfast, toasted and spread with butter and jam.

By HALEY J. WILSON



Buttery Dinner Rolls

Makes 12 rolls; Total time: about 4 hours

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup whole milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick unsalted butter, diced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 pkg. active dry yeast ($2\frac{1}{4}$ tsp.)
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 egg yolk, beaten

Heat milk in a small saucepan to 180° over medium heat. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ stick butter and sugar, stirring to dissolve sugar. Let mixture cool to 105° – 110° . Stir in yeast. Allow mixture to rest in a warm place until it swells and becomes bubbly, about 10 minutes.

Grease inside of a bowl and a muffin tin with 2 Tbsp. softened butter.

Whisk together flour and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Add yeast mixture, egg, and egg yolk.

Knead mixture with a dough hook, on medium speed, until dough forms a ball and pulls away from the bowl, 6–8 minutes. Add 1 Tbsp. extra flour at a time, if necessary. Place dough in prepared bowl, cover, and let it rise until it's doubled in size, about 2 hours.

Divide dough into 36 equal portions. Shape portions into balls; place three balls in each well of the prepared muffin tin. Cover dough with plastic wrap. (At this point, shaped dough may be refrigerated overnight.) Let rise until doubled in size, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours ($2\frac{1}{2}$ hours if dough was chilled). While dough is rising, preheat oven to 375° with rack in the lower third.

Bake rolls until light brown, about 10 minutes. Cool rolls slightly in pan before serving.

Per roll: 181 cal; 7g total fat (4g sat); 48mg chol; 26g carb; 173mg sodium; 1g fiber; 4g protein

baking basics

When it comes to baking, we've got the tips to keep you on track. From tools to ingredients, you'll be set for success every time you enter the kitchen.

Chicago Metallic Commercial Bakeware Muffin Tin

\$17 chefscatalog.com

Our preferred muffin tin is made from heavy-gauge aluminized stainless steel and conducts heat like a champ. Its uncoated surface evenly disperses heat for consistent baking—just right for when you want to amaze your friends with delicious dinner rolls or your favorite cupcake recipe.



Liquid vs. Dry Measuring Cups

Every cook worth his or her salt knows accurate measuring equals baking success. Though liquid and dry measuring cups hold the same volume, you need both in your baking arsenal. It's essential to level flour or sugar for the correct yield—impossible when measuring dry ingredients in a liquid measuring cup. It's equally difficult to pour liquids to the lip of a dry measuring cup without spilling.



Stretch-Tite Wrapmaster 2500

\$20 stretchtite.com

Wrestling with plastic wrap can nearly set your teeth on edge. You tear it from the box only to have it fold over on itself. We like the Stretch-Tite® Wrapmaster 2500 because it eliminates this frustration. Just drop a roll of plastic wrap into the dispenser, pull the wrap over the food to be covered, then press the lid down to easily cut the wrap.



FLOUR BASICS: *measure up!*

How you measure flour can have a dramatic effect on the amount that ends up in a recipe. Many cooks dip their measuring cup into the flour and either shake or level off the excess. This can result in as much as 25 percent more flour than called for. To properly measure flour, we employ what's known as the "spoon and sweep method." Use a spoon to fluff flour in the bag or canister, then lightly spoon it into your measuring cup. Without packing, use a straight-edged spatula or knife to level the flour until it's even with the top of the measuring cup.



OUR FAVORITE

King Arthur Flour is our first pick for baking because it's made from hard wheat, which contains 20 percent more protein than most standard grocery-store flours. This extra protein provides for a better rise in breads, retains moisture in cakes, and produces a more tender pie crust than flours made from soft wheat. We also really like that none of King Arthur flours are bleached.

redefining alfredo

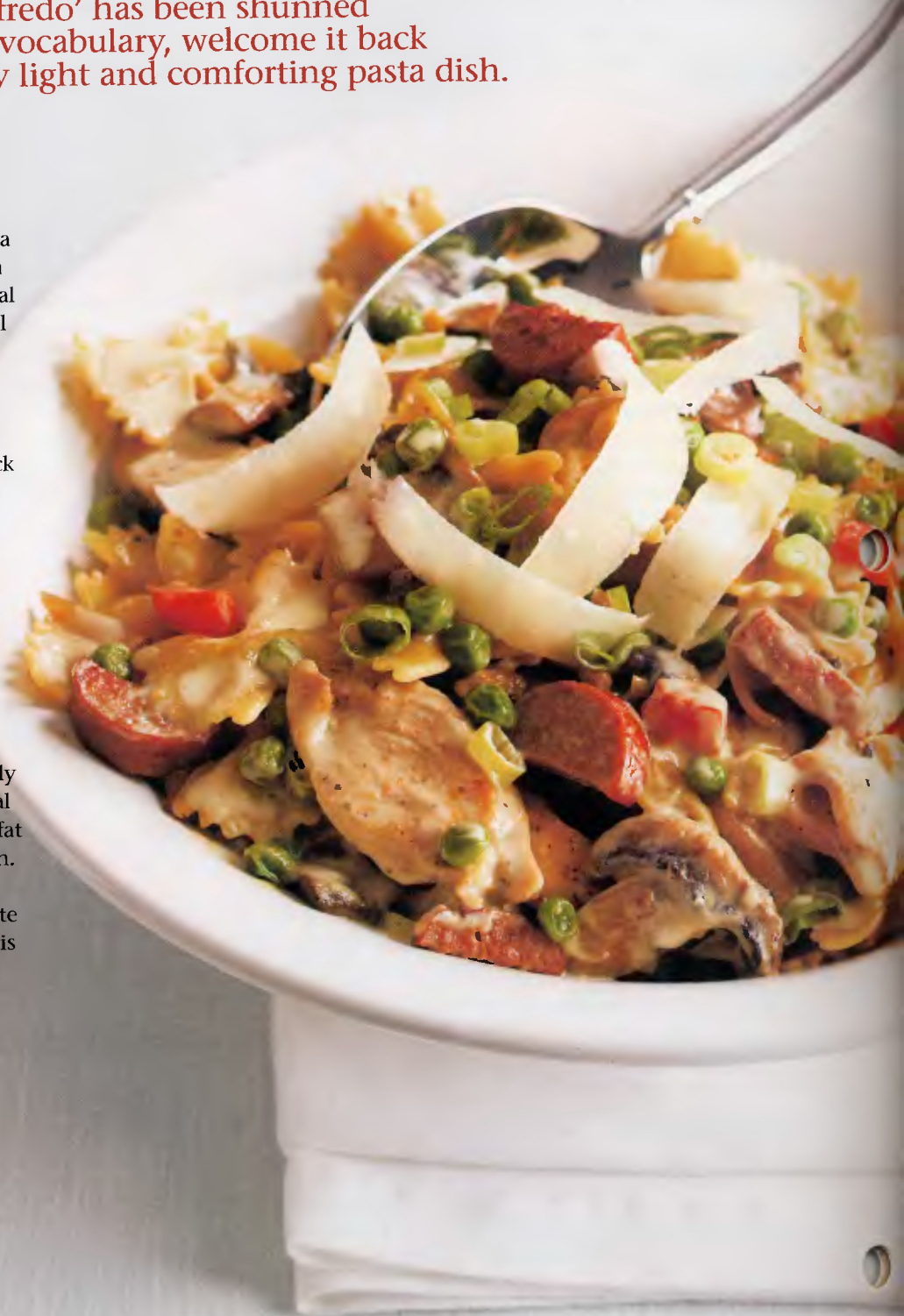
There are some words that don't often grace the lips of light eaters. If 'alfredo' has been shunned from your culinary vocabulary, welcome it back with this deliciously light and comforting pasta dish.

By JESSIE SHAFER

Some things are better left alone, right? When you crave a comfort food—like pasta in an alfredo sauce—you want a meal that's creamy, rich, and hits all those familiar taste buds. If you broaden your definition of "better," the flavorful goodness you've come to love in an alfredo can love you back with a more healthful version that rivals the "real" stuff.

Low-fat evaporated milk and a sprinkling of Parmesan make for a much lighter cream sauce that's still thick and satisfying. Cajun-spiced chicken and turkey kielbasa round out the recipe, which also boasts fresh mushrooms, bell pepper, and peas. The only thing missing is the additional 400 calories and 30 grams of fat found in a regular alfredo dish.

A side salad drizzled with homemade Tomato Vinaigrette serves as the final word on this comforting pasta meal.



Lite Pasta Alfredo with chicken, kielbasa & a cajun kick

This dish—loaded with vegetables, chicken, and kielbasa—won't leave you hungry. If you want even more spicy flavor, up the Cajun seasoning to taste.

Makes 4 servings (6 cups); Total time: 40 minutes

- 4 oz. dry farfalle pasta
- 1/2 cup low-fat evaporated milk
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tsp. salt-free Cajun seasoning
- 1/2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into strips
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 oz. turkey kielbasa, sliced into half-moons
- 2 cups sliced button mushrooms
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup reserved pasta water
- 1 cup frozen peas
- Kosher salt to taste
- Sliced scallions
- Parmesan cheese shavings

Bring a large pot of salted water to boiling for the farfalle. Cook farfalle according to package directions and drain; reserve 1/4 cup of the cooking water. Set aside farfalle and pasta-cooking water.

Whisk together evaporated milk, 1/4 cup Parmesan, and egg yolk in a small bowl for alfredo sauce; set mixture aside.

Sprinkle Cajun seasoning over chicken; toss to coat. Coat a large sauté pan with nonstick spray. Sauté chicken in the pan over medium-high heat until meat is browned and fully cooked, about 4 minutes. Remove chicken; set it aside. Add oil to pan.

Stir in kielbasa, mushrooms, onion, bell pepper, and garlic. Cook until kielbasa browns, about 4 minutes.

Deglaze pan with reserved pasta-cooking water, scraping any bits from bottom of pan. Reduce until water is nearly evaporated. Add chicken, farfalle, and peas. Add alfredo sauce, stirring until thickened. Season dish with salt; garnish with scallions and Parmesan shavings.

Per serving: 403 cal; 11g total fat (4g sat); 129mg chol; 40g carb; 728mg sodium; 5g fiber; 34g protein



Use a pair of tongs to turn and separate the Cajun-seasoned chicken pieces as they sauté in the pan.



Add pasta water to kielbasa and vegetables; stir with a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits in the pan.



Tomato Vinaigrette

This dressing is a natural on a green salad paired with the pasta alfredo.

Makes 1/2 cup; Total time: 5 minutes

- 1 Roma tomato, chopped (1/2 cup)
- 2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

Blend tomato, vinegar, oil, mustard, salt, and pepper in a mini food processor until tomato is puréed. Serve over salad greens.

Per 2 Tbsp: 23 cal; 2g total fat (0g sat); 0mg chol; 1g carb; 9mg sodium; 0g fiber; 0g protein



Return cooked chicken to the pan, then add farfalle and frozen peas before stirring in the alfredo sauce.

tips & timesavers



EGG GRATING

To make my signature egg salad especially light and fluffy, I grate hard-boiled eggs through the wider slots of a cheese grater. This keeps the eggs from getting mashed together. I also use this trick when preparing egg yolks for deviled eggs.

Judy Klos
Bayport, MN



sauce fake-out

OK, I admit it: Sometimes I cheat and use melted vanilla ice cream for a dessert sauce. Stir in a few spoonfuls of rum, and it's even more delicious. The best part is that everyone thinks I made this sauce from scratch!

Casey Kadavy, Chandler, AZ

Test Kitchen Note

Casey serves her faux sauce on top of **Chocolate Bread Pudding** (*Cuisine at Home*, Feb. 2006 issue). You can find the recipe at CuisineAtHome.com under Issue 74's *Online Extras*.

french fries

When I make french fries, I do it a little differently than most people. The standard way is to blanch raw fries in 325-degree oil until they're limp, then remove them and fry them again later in 360-degree oil. Instead, I prefer to blanch the fries in boiling salted water. It works just as well, but it makes less mess and uses less oil.

Sharon Howard, Eugene, OR



tuna ricer

My potato ricer makes an excellent tool to drain canned tuna. I just empty the can into the ricer, close the handle, and squeeze out the water or oil.

Paul Reuter
Wrightstown, NJ



freezing sauce

I freeze extra tomato sauce in quart-sized plastic bags. It's easy: Pour sauce into a bag, then store horizontally on a freezer shelf. Frozen bags stack well and thaw quickly.

Margi Galligan
Beaumont, CA

tasty chicken

I like to defrost chicken in a bowl of cold, salted water in the refrigerator. It thaws and brines at the same time.

Cecelia Rooney
Point Pleasant, NJ

non-skid board

I use a rubber bath mat under my cutting board to keep it from slipping while I slice and dice. Suction cups on the bottom of the mat secure it and the board firmly in place. Plus, the mat is easy to clean—I put it right into the dishwasher.

Dae Thompson
Marietta, GA



Greek Salsa Chicken

This recipe goes well with roasted new potatoes. Cut the potatoes into chunks, then coat with olive oil and season. Roast them for about an hour at 450°.

Makes 6 servings; Total time: 1 hour

FOR THE SALSA—

- 4 oz. crumbled feta cheese
- 1 cup halved grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1/4 cup pitted kalamata olives
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh oregano

FOR THE CHICKEN—

- 6 skinless, bone-in chicken breast halves (6-7 oz. each), seasoned with kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 lemons, cut into wedges

Preheat oven to 450°.

Combine feta, tomatoes, olives,

parsley, lemon juice, 1/4 cup olive oil, and oregano for the salsa in a large bowl. Cover and chill salsa.

Sauté chicken pieces in 2 Tbsp. olive oil in a large roasting pan over medium-high heat until chicken is browned on skin-side. Turn over chicken.

Squeeze lemon wedges over chicken to coat with lemon juice, then nestle squeezed lemon wedges around chicken breasts. Roast until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 160° on an instant-read thermometer, about 30 minutes.

Transfer chicken and lemons to a large platter; top with salsa.

Per serving: 381 cal; 22g total fat (6g sat); 115mg chol; 4g carb; 478mg sodium; 1g fiber; 42g protein

CUISINE TIPS \$25 for Your Best Tip or Recipe

Do you have a unique way of solving a cooking problem? Does one of your recipes receive rave reviews every time you make it? We'd like to hear from you! Just write down your cooking tip or recipe, and mail it in or contact us through our e-mail address shown below. Please include your name, address, and daytime phone number in case we have questions. We'll pay you \$25 if we publish your idea.

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READER FAVORITE RECIPE

I've subscribed to *Cuisine at home* for years and love the weeknight recipes. One of my favorites is *Greek Salsa Chicken* (Issue 42, Dec. 2003). I prepare it at least twice a month!

Gina Winters
San Clemente, CA

magic beans

Jack should have just eaten the beans from the stalk—they're a nutritional bag of riches.

By MARY JANE MILLS

It's time to give beans a little respect—at least more than the playground song does. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certainly respects them. It recommends three cups of these nutritional powerhouses for adults each week. With more varieties of beans than you can shake a stick at, it's no problem to find beans to toss into a soup, salad, or side dish.

It's true that beans are high in carbohydrates, but don't hold that against them. They're full of the complex kind that does all sorts of good for our bodies. They're also cholesterol- and saturated-fat-free. See, there's no excuse: It's time to put beans on the menu regularly—especially if you're battling the bulge. One cup of beans contains 13 grams of fiber (more than any other vegetable and nearly a third of the USDA's recommended 25 to 30 grams per day). You'll feel fuller longer because their sustained energy release keeps you charged all day. But beans should be part of your diet even if your waistline isn't worrisome. As one version of the song says, they're good



COOL BEANS

1) RED BEANS & 7) KIDNEY BEANS, light pink to maroon in color, pack almost as much of an antioxidant punch as wild blueberries. They're not too shabby in the protein department, either. Half a cup of kidney beans offers the same amount of protein as 1 ounce of red meat—without any of the fat or cholesterol. **2) BUTTER BEANS & 5) LIMA BEANS** are full of blood-pressure-lowering potassium, and they contain a healthy dose of the antioxidant selenium. Find them frozen, dried, canned, and even fresh.

3) BLACK BEANS, or turtle beans, house the cancer-fighting antioxidant anthocyanin (as much as grapes or cranberries) in their shiny black coating. **4) FAVA BEANS**, also sold as broad, Windsor, or horse beans, made their debut about 5,000 years ago, but they're just catching on with chefs in the United States. Find them fresh in their shells in the spring, or canned or dried year-round. Use favas in soups (page 11), salads, or for puréed spreads. Containing naturally occurring L-dopa, they've been used with Parkinson's

patients. Be careful, though! Some people, especially many of Mediterranean descent, are allergic to favas.

6) NAVY BEANS, the little white soup beans so loved by the U.S. Navy that they bear the moniker, are high in calcium. One cup has nearly 12 percent of the calcium needed each day—almost double that in any other type of bean.

8) PINTO BEANS, mottled red and white beans common in Mexican cuisine, are loaded with folate, fiber, magnesium and iron. Add them to your dinner menu next time it heads South of the Border.

for our hearts. Eating beans on a regular basis has been shown to reduce our risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers—not to mention that they've also been shown to help lower blood pressure. So the next time you see beans in the store, throw some in your cart. Then try this tune on for size: "Beans, beans—the more you eat, the healthier you'll be." It's not quite as catchy as the playground renditions, but it's true!

Spring Fava Bean Soup

One pound of fresh fava beans yields only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shelled beans. Store whole beans in a paper bag in the refrigerator, but plan to use them within a few days of purchase. If you can't find favas, cannellini beans work well, too.

Makes 4 servings (about 7 cups); Total time: about 30 minutes

- 3 oz. prosciutto, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 leeks (white part only), diced (about 2 cups)
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry white wine
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 3 cups shelled fresh fava beans
- 1 cup chopped zucchini
- 1 cup chopped asparagus
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup thinly sliced fresh basil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shaved Pecorino cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh mint
- 1 Tbsp. minced lemon zest

Sauté prosciutto in olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat until it's crisp. Transfer prosciutto to a paper-towel-lined plate; set aside. Reserve drippings.

Sweat leeks, garlic, and oregano in same pan with drippings over medium-low heat until vegetables soften, about 5 minutes.

Deglaze pan with wine; simmer until liquid is nearly evaporated. Stir in broth; bring mixture to a boil. Add beans, zucchini, and asparagus. Reduce heat; simmer until vegetables are tender.

Stir in basil and sautéed prosciutto. Serve soup garnished with Pecorino, mint, and lemon zest.

Per serving: 402 cal; 15g total fat (5g sat); 37mg chol; 39g carb; 1281mg sodium; 10g fiber; 28g protein



String fava beans and remove their shells. Blanch beans 30 seconds to 1 minute, then immediately shock them in ice water.



After blanching and shocking favas, peel off their outer shell, which is hard to digest, to reveal bright green beans.



CANNED VS. DRIED BEANS

It's always smart to keep a variety of beans in your pantry whether they're dried or canned. Both have health benefits.

Price: Beans are easy on the wallet. A 15-ounce can of beans costs about \$1.50, while one pound of dried beans averages 50 cents to \$1. You're paying for volume, not weight with canned beans, so you get only about two cups of beans from a can. A pound of dried beans yields seven to nine cups of cooked beans. Dried beans are cheaper, but they require hours of soaking and cooking. Sometimes convenience trumps cost.

Sodium: Yes, canned beans have added salt, but low-sodium varieties exist. Rinsing canned beans under cold running water for one minute can remove up to 40 percent of their sodium, making canned a better choice than no beans at all.

Folate: Dried beans contain lots of folate, a B vitamin that our bodies can't produce but that's needed for proper cell development. One cup

of cooked beans has more than half the daily folate needed by women of child-bearing age.

COOKING DRIED BEANS

If you'd rather can the cans, give dried beans a shot.

1) Sort through and rinse beans to remove any rocks or pebbles. 2) Soak beans. Cover by two inches with cold water, cover container, and chill beans 4 to 12 hours. The longer beans soak, the shorter their cooking time. Plus, soaking helps rid beans of the enzyme that earned them their "musical" status. 3) Drain beans, and transfer them to a pot. Cover beans with water by two inches and bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer beans for 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, adding more water if needed. Test the beans for doneness by tasting. When they're chewy, not chalky, they're done. Drain beans and chill them for up to 3 days.

answers to your questions

FENNEL BULB should be clean, crisp, and have no brown spots.

STALK or stems should be firm and bright green in color.

FRONDS should be feathery and show no signs of wilting.



(Q:) How do I choose fresh fennel, and what's the best way to prepare it?

—Deb Pendleton, Des Moines, IA

(Answer:) The fennel bulb grown and eaten in the United States is known as Florence fennel. It's only been popular here for about the last 10 years, though it's been around since Greek and Roman times. Fennel bulbs have a delicate licorice flavor that's most noticeable in the vegetable's raw state, which is why it's well suited to salad preparations, like our Chicken Salad on page 17. Fennel also can be sautéed, braised, or added to soups. All parts of the fennel bulb are edible—including its celery-like stalks and feathery fronds, which are often used as a flavor-packed garnish. The fennel season (fall through spring) is nearly over, so grab these slightly sweet plants while you still can.

COOKING CLUE

to sweat:

A frequent direction in *Cuisine* recipes, sweating is a technique by which foods, usually vegetables, are cooked in a small amount of fat over low heat. This method softens ingredients without browning. Follow this rule of thumb: No sizzling. If you can hear the food cooking, you're sautéing and not sweating; turn down the heat.

(Q:) What are wheat berries? Where can I find them, and how do I cook them?

—Laura Thies, Sewickley, PA

(Answer:) Wheat berries aren't a typical berry. They're whole, unprocessed kernels of wheat, so they contain the germ, endosperm, and bran portions of the kernel, and they're packed with fiber. Look for red (hard) wheat berries that haven't been processed, rather than the white (soft) berries that have undergone some processing and therefore have lost some of their nutritional benefits. Find them in bulk online, in natural-foods stores, or in the organic sections of supermarkets.

Wheat berries can be used in a variety of dishes from cereals to salads to pilafs. Most directions suggest soaking them overnight in water to soften before cooking. Soaking isn't really necessary, however. Instead, boil the berries for an hour; then use them in or as a topping for salads, or continue cooking them according to your recipe's directions.



(Q: Are curry powder and curry paste the same thing? Can they be used interchangeably?)

—Sue Carpenter, Boulder City, NV

INDIAN



(Answer: Traditional Indian curry powders are ground fresh daily and contain up to 20 different spices and seeds, like turmeric (for the signature yellow color), cumin, coriander, and cayenne pepper. Commercial curry powders, though, come as only standard and madras, the hotter style. Curry pastes are available in six “everyday” concentrated varieties, each with a specific use and flavor ranging from spicy to sour, so using them interchangeably isn’t a good idea.

THAI



Thai curry pastes are located in the international sections of supermarkets. Made of such Thai staples as galangal, lemon grass, garlic, and chile peppers (red or green depending on the color of the paste), Thai curry pastes are green (the mildest), yellow (medium), and red (fiery). They should be used according to recipe directions, but don’t substitute them for Indian curry powders or pastes.

TELL ME MORE: Convection Cooking

Lately, one question has popped up a lot in your letters and e-mails—How do I use my convection oven? Here’s the Cliffs Notes version about how to fire up that kitchen toy and roast your way to succulent meats, perfectly caramelized vegetables, and crisp bread crusts.

Your best bet is to follow your owner’s manual, but here’s the lowdown on convection ovens. Unlike regular ovens, which surround food with hot, dry air, and are notorious for hot and cool spots (that’s why the cookies on one end of your baking sheet may burn, while the others are undercooked), most convection ovens have a fan that typically sits near the oven’s heating element. It evenly circulates hot air in the oven, equalizing oven temperature. True or pure convection ovens, usually found in higher-end ovens, have an additional element that surrounds the fan and circulates heated air inside the oven. The fan forces heated air horizontally through the oven racks around the food, cooking it evenly. Oven position is relatively unimportant. Any rack in a true convection oven should yield the same cooking results, with foods on the bottom rack getting no browner than others.

Virtually any food that you’d cook in a regular oven benefits from convection cooking. Actually, your wallet might benefit, too. With convection cooking, the oven heats faster and cooks food 25 percent faster—and usually at 25 degrees lower than ordinary ovens. Poultry skins are crispy because they render faster while meat stays juicy, roasted vegetables caramelize more quickly, and baked goods brown evenly. Try your favorite recipes in a convection oven, or give it a shot with Sunday Roast Chicken (page 45) or Classic Carrot Cake (page 48), to decide for yourself whether this oven lives up to its hype.

TRUE: They’re the only food to garner such a distinction by the USDA.



“Beans are rather musical in nature, if by that you mean in a musical-chair kind of way. You can substitute practically any bean in a recipe with whatever variety is within arm’s reach.”

—Associate Editor Mary Jane Mills

CUISINE Q&A

Do you have a question for *Cuisine at home* magazine?

If you’re mystified by a cooking term, procedure, or technique, we’re here to help. To submit your cooking question for possible publication, contact us through our e-mail address below. Please include your name, address, e-mail address, and a daytime phone number.

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updated classics

A familiar meal like steak or salad can satisfy your craving and fit your schedule. These two updated menus meet both criteria and just may become your go-to ideas when your family asks, 'When's dinner gonna be ready?'

By HALEY J. WILSON

The first of the updated menus is southern-inspired with steak, grits, and greens. Flatiron steak may be an unfamiliar cut of beef, but its affordability, tenderness, and beefy flavor make it very appealing. Grits, coarsely ground corn, take quite a while to cook, so this dish relies on "quick" grits to speed the process. Pimiento cheese, a southern staple, makes these grits irresistible. Kale accompanies this meal instead of the more predictable collard greens. Wilted in the same pan used to sear the steak, kale tastes as good as collards—but takes a fraction of the time to cook. The second menu may seem typical, but it's far from it. Check out the fresh Chicken Salad on page 17.

Pan-Seared Flatiron Steak with pimiento cheese grits & greens

Flatiron steak is sometimes labeled as top-blade beef steak. If you can't find it, you can substitute beef flank steak.

Makes 4 servings; Total time: 25 minutes

FOR THE GRITS—

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 2 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 jar pimientos (4 oz.), divided
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup quick grits
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup thinly sliced scallions

FOR THE STEAK—

- 1 beef flatiron steak ($\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick; 1 lb.)
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

FOR THE GREENS—

- 8 cups chopped kale
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

BIG CHEESE FLAVOR

Pimiento cheese gives these grits pizzazz, and it's simple to make. If you prefer, substitute $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of purchased pimiento cheese spread.

Purée Cheddar cheese, cream cheese, and half of the pimientos for pimiento cheese in a mini food processor until fairly smooth. Transfer mixture to a bowl and stir in remaining pimientos; set aside.

Boil water in a saucepan; sprinkle in grits. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and cook grits for 10 minutes, whisking frequently.

Stir pimiento cheese into grits; heat through. Add scallions; season with salt and pepper.

Season steak with garlic powder, salt, and pepper. For medium-rare steak, sear meat in a large sauté pan in oil over high heat, covered, for 6 minutes total, turning once. Remove steak from pan; let it rest for 5 minutes before slicing it thinly against the grain.

Add kale and pepper flakes to pan used for cooking steak. Add 1 Tbsp. water if pan is dry. Cover greens; cook until they're wilted. Stir in vinegar.

Per serving: 516 cal; 29g total fat (13g sat); 113mg chol; 32g carb; 394mg sodium; 4g fiber; 35g protein



Flatiron steak is best served medium-rare. High heat will result in a good sear on the steak without overcooking it.



Cooking kale in the same pan as the steak adds flavor to the greens.



LIGHTEN UP: Use neufchatel cheese and shredded 2% Cheddar to save 61 calories and 7g fat.

Chicken salad is always a hit. With the fresh twist that it's given here, you'll want to make it every time you have leftover chicken. Don't hesitate to use rotisserie chicken from the grocery store. To lighten this salad and give it a fresher flavor, we substituted Greek yogurt for a portion of the mayonnaise dressing. Then we added fennel, orange juice, orange zest, and tarragon. The result is a refreshing, light-tasting but satisfying entrée. Don't pass on the Orange Freeze (page 17). It nicely echoes the orange flavor in the chicken salad.



LIGHTEN UP: Use low-fat mayonnaise and plain low-fat yogurt to save 100 calories and 12g fat.



FENNEL TIP

Here's how to obtain the greatest yield from a bulb of fennel: Slice it once lengthwise down the center. Next, slice off the root end, then peel off layers of the vegetable, removing more root as you go.

GREEK YOGURT

Greek yogurt is plain yogurt that's been strained of much of its liquid (called whey). It makes a thick dressing with a light flavor.

Chicken Salad with orange & fennel

For a super-fast dinner, make this salad ahead of time. It will keep in the refrigerator up to three days.

Makes 4 servings (about 5 cups)
Total time: 20 minutes

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup Greek yogurt or plain yogurt
- 2 Tbsp. orange juice
- Zest of 1/2 an orange
- 4 cups diced cooked chicken
- 1 cup halved red grapes
- 3/4 cup diced fennel bulb
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fennel fronds
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh tarragon
- Kosher salt and pepper

Whisk mayonnaise, yogurt, orange juice, and zest together in a bowl.

Stir in chicken, grapes, diced fennel, almonds, fennel fronds, and tarragon. Season salad with salt and pepper. Serve immediately on a bed of mixed greens, or cover and chill.

Per serving: 500 cal; 31g total fat (5g sat); 115mg chol; 12g carb; 246mg sodium; 2g fiber; 41g protein



Toss all the salad ingredients together with dressing to thoroughly coat them.

Orange Freeze

Try substituting lime or another frozen juice concentrate instead of the orange called for in the recipe.

Makes 4 servings (about 4 cups)
Total time: 5 minutes

- 1 cup milk
- 1 can frozen orange juice concentrate (6 oz.)
- 1/2 cup half-and-half
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 14 ice cubes

Blend milk, orange juice concentrate, half-and-half, powdered sugar, water, vanilla, and ice cubes in a blender until smooth. Serve drink immediately.

Per serving: 218 cal; 4g total fat (3g sat); 20mg chol; 41g carb; 44mg sodium; 0g fiber; 4g protein



vegetarian for a day

Meat always gets a place of honor on the plate—front and center. Why not give it a rest? Leave it off the menu and go vegetarian for just one day. With our help, it's easy and tasty to go green.

By MARY JANE MILLS



MYTH > VEGETARIANS EAT NO ANIMAL PRODUCTS.

Some vegetarians do consume milk and/or eggs. Only vegans (fewer than 1 percent of all vegetarians) refuse any and all animal products.

If Hank Aaron, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Mr. Rogers, and Mary Tyler Moore seem like a rather motley crew, I'd be hard-pressed to disagree—but they have one thing in common, a vegetarian diet. They're not alone. Vegetarianism is on the rise in the United States, with most recent statistics placing the number of vegetarians at around 7 million. While you may not be vegetarian, and you might not even know anyone who is (although that seems nearly impossible these days), many of you recently have told us that you'd like to see more vegetarian dishes featured in the pages of *Cuisine*. That places you squarely among the nearly 22.8 million adults who are inclined to follow a vegetarian diet some of the time. I'm with you. Although I'm not a vegetarian, the benefits of the diet appeal to this Midwestern farm girl. **Who isn't interested in reducing their risk for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer, or in lowering their blood pressure?**

Making the shift isn't as difficult as we might think. Many of us already are eating vegetarian foods without realizing it. Have you eaten a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich for lunch, or had macaroni and cheese, or cheese pizza for dinner? If so, you've indulged in a vegetarian meal. While becoming vegetarian might not be on your to-do list, it should be on your to-try list—at least for one day. If you're so inclined, give it a shot—along with thousands of other people—on the first day of spring. Since 1985, the Great American Meatout has offered a perfect opportunity for meat-eaters to experience a day in the life of a vegetarian. We'll make it easy for you with three knock-out recipes, starting with breakfast and ending with dinner. Even by the end of the day, I'm betting that you still won't be asking, "Where's the beef?" After all, vegetarianism isn't about deprivation, it's about making conscious decisions about the food on your plate.

VEGETARIAN PRIMER

Determining the number of vegetarians isn't an exact science, since even many self-proclaimed vegetarians aren't really sure how to define the term. With more than a few types, it's easy to understand the confusion. Here's a road map to help you navigate the vegetarian highway.



Vegan:

Does not consume, use, or wear any animal product or by-product. Foods excluded from a vegan diet include honey, dairy products, and eggs.



Vegetarian:

Eats no meat, fish, or poultry, and consumes no meat-processing by-products such as gelatin.



Lacto-Vegetarian:

Eats no meat, fish, or poultry, but does eat dairy products.



Ovo-Vegetarian:

Eats no meat, fish, or poultry, but does consume eggs. Most vegetarians prefer free-range eggs.



Lacto-Ovo-Vegetarian:

Eats no meat, fish, or poultry, but does eat dairy products and eggs. This is the largest group of vegetarians.



Pesco-Vegetarian:

Eats no meat or poultry, but does consume fish and seafood.



Fruitarian:

Consumes only raw or dried fruit and fruit-vegetables such as tomatoes. Also eats nuts, seeds, and such non-sweet fruits as cucumbers, olives, and avocados.



Flexitarian or Semi-Vegetarian:

Consumes mostly vegetarian foods with an occasional serving of meat, poultry, fish, or seafood.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reasons to try a meat-free meal:

CALCIUM BONUS: Studies have shown vegetarians to be less prone to osteoporosis. In fact, most vegetarians have higher calcium absorption and retention rates, since they eat little to no animal protein, a food that may encourage a higher loss of calcium.

REDUCES CARBON FOOTPRINT: Recent studies by the University of Chicago have shown that we would do more to reduce our carbon footprint by switching from a meat-based to a plant-based diet than we would if we traded in our largest gas-guzzling SUVs for efficient hybrid vehicles.

ECONOMICAL: A plant-based diet can be cheaper. The cost of one pound of tofu averages \$3–\$5. The cost of one pound of dried beans usually sneaks in under \$1. That's enough tofu to feed a family of four and enough beans to feed one cup to at least seven people. One 8-ounce beef sirloin steak averages \$2.49, and after cooking it feeds only one or at most two people.

MYTH > VEGETARIAN DIETS ARE BORING.

Not so. Need proof? Check out these recipes. Many ethnic cuisines have prolific vegetarian menus, making it interesting, easy, and affordable to go vegetarian.

Breakfast is probably the easiest meal of the day at which to skip meat. Many of us already eat veggie omelets, muffins, and cereals every day. But if you simply crave the flavor of animal protein, give the meat analogs in the freezer section a shot. They've come a long way from their early days on the market. In our Test Kitchen, we found that many of these sausages were nearly identical in texture to "real" sausage—not to mention that the spices were spot-on, making these products taste very much like regular pork breakfast sausages.



Caprese Eggs 'Benedict' with tomato gravy

Smoked mozzarella gives this egg dish a distinct smokey "bacon" flavor.

Makes 6 servings
Total time: about 30 minutes

FOR THE GRAVY—

- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chopped Roma tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup milk
- Kosher salt and pepper to taste

FOR THE CIABATTA AND EGGS—

- 6 ciabatta rolls, halved
- 12 slices smoked fresh mozzarella cheese (optional)
- 2 cups fresh spinach
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil, divided
- White distilled vinegar
- 12 eggs

Preheat oven to 425°.

Sauté onion and garlic in 2 Tbsp. oil in a saucepan over medium heat until soft, about 3 minutes. Whisk in flour; cook 2 minutes.

Pulse tomatoes in food processor. Add tomatoes and paste to onions; sauté 1 minute. Whisk in broth and milk; cook gravy until thickened, 4–5 minutes. Season gravy with salt and pepper. Keep it warm while preparing bread and eggs.

Brush remaining 2 Tbsp. oil onto ciabatta halves. Toast ciabatta in oven on baking sheet until golden, 8–10 minutes. Top bread with mozzarella slices; toast until cheese melts, about 5 minutes.

Combine spinach and 1/4 cup chopped basil in a bowl; divide evenly among ciabatta toasts.

Heat water and vinegar (2 Tbsp. vinegar to 1 qt. water) in a saucepan until bubbles break just before hitting the surface, 160°–180°. Poach eggs until whites are firm but yolks aren't set, 4–6 minutes. Remove eggs with slotted spoon

to a paper-towel-lined plate. Top each toast with a poached egg. Stir remaining 1/4 cup basil into tomato gravy. Top eggs with gravy. Serve immediately.

Per 1 egg; 1/2 roll; 2 Tbsp sauce: 297 cal; 15g total fat (5g sat); 195mg chol; 21g carb; 476mg sodium; 1g fiber; 16g protein



A long-handled measuring cup keeps your hands clear of the hot water and the egg intact when it gently hits the liquid.



SEITAN

Affectionately called "wheat meat" for its meaty texture and wheat gluten base, seitan (SAY-tan) makes a terrific doppelganger for chicken. High in protein but low on flavor, it easily "borrows" taste from whatever's cooked with it. For the best texture add it to dishes just to heat through. Look for seitan in refrigerated sections of Asian or natural foods markets.

Burritos are weekly lunch fare for me. Sometimes, though, I get bored by the typical bean-and-rice variety that's the only thing available for vegetarians. That's why this pozole [poh-ZOH-leh] burrito is welcome in my brown bag anytime. Traditionally a Mexican soup, pozole is easily transformed into a burrito filling, and hominy is a refreshing replacement for beans. Plus, oven-frying means these burritos are crisp and low-calorie.

Pozole Burritos

Use any leftover sauce in place of enchilada sauce, or double the burrito recipe.

Makes 6 servings

Total time: about 1 hour

FOR THE POZOLE SAUCE—

- 3/4 cup chopped tomatoes
- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1/4 cup torn dried ancho chiles, stemmed and seeded
- 1 corn tortilla, chopped (6-inch)
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 tsp. each ground cumin and dried oregano leaves
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable broth

FOR THE FILLING—

- 1 cup sliced red onion
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/2 tsp. each ground cumin and dried oregano leaves
- 1 cup shredded seitan (optional)*
- 1 can yellow hominy, drained and rinsed (14 oz.)
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese (optional)
- 2 tsp. lime juice
- Kosher salt to taste
- 6 burrito-size tortillas (10-inch)
- Avocado-Cilantro Crema or sour cream

Preheat oven to 425° with a metal baking sheet inside it.

Sauté tomatoes, diced onion, garlic, chiles, tortilla, tomato paste,

chili powder, 1/2 tsp. cumin, and 1/2 tsp. oregano in 2 Tbsp. oil in a small saucepan over medium heat for 5 minutes. Stir in broth, bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer sauce for 10 minutes. Transfer mixture to a blender; purée until smooth. Return sauce to pan; keep it warm over low heat. **Sauté** red onion and bell pepper in a sauté pan in 2 Tbsp. olive oil over medium-high heat until vegetables start to brown. Add 1/2 tsp. cumin, 1/2 tsp. oregano, seitan, hominy, cheese, and lime juice. Stir in 1/2 cup pozole sauce. Season with salt. **Place** 3/4 cup filling on lower third of each tortilla. Fold bottom of tortilla over filling, fold in sides, and rollup. Brush both sides of burrito with remaining 1 Tbsp. oil. **Transfer** burritos to hot baking sheet; bake for 10 minutes. Flip and bake until tortillas are crisp and golden, about 10 minutes. Serve with Avocado-Cilantro Crema or sour cream.

***If omitting seitan in the filling, increase red onion and bell pepper by 1/2 cup each.**

Per burrito: 466 cal; 21g total fat (6g sat); 17mg chol; 57g carb; 913mg sodium; 6g fiber; 15g protein



After puréeing, the sauce is very thick—that's OK. Just be sure the dried chile peppers aren't still in large chunks.

onlinerecipe
avocado-cilantro crema

Just because dinner is vegetarian tonight, you shouldn't feel obligated to eat tofu. This risotto can stand alone as a rich and satisfying meal, but the tofu does offer extras. It's a vehicle for coconut and spice, and it contributes to a healthful vegetarian diet. Loaded with calcium, and high in iron and protein, tofu is easy to digest, making it a valuable addition on the plate. Make sure you buy firm or extra-firm tofu. With its lower liquid content, it won't need to be pressed as long (*see photo, below*). The pressing step shouldn't be bypassed: Once the liquid is removed, tofu can absorb more of the flavors of the other foods with which it's cooked.

Mulligatawny Risotto with coconut-crusted tofu

Using lite coconut milk instead of the full-fat variety ensures it won't curdle.

Makes 6 servings; Total time: 45 minutes

FOR THE RISOTTO—

- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 can lite coconut milk (14 oz.)
- 1/2 cup diced orange bell pepper
- 1/4 cup diced onion
- 2 tsp. each minced garlic, fresh gingerroot, and jalapeño pepper
- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. curry powder
- 1/8 tsp. red pepper flakes
- 1 1/2 cups dry arborio rice
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 1 cup halved grape tomatoes
- 1 Granny Smith apple, diced
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- Kosher salt to taste

FOR THE TOFU (OPTIONAL)—

- 1/4 cup finely shredded unsweetened coconut
- 1/2 tsp. each ground cumin and coriander
- 1/4 tsp. each ground ginger and cloves
- 1 pkg. extra-firm tofu, pressed, sliced 3/4-inch thick on the diagonal, and seasoned with salt (12–16 oz.)
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Combine broth and coconut milk in a saucepan over low heat, and keep mixture warm.

Sauté bell pepper, onion, garlic, gingerroot, and jalapeño in 3 Tbsp. oil over medium heat until soft, 3–4 minutes. Add curry powder, pepper flakes, and rice; stir and cook until vegetables and rice are coated with oil, 1–2 minutes.

Add wine; simmer, stirring constantly, until liquid evaporates, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1/2 cup broth mixture; simmer until it's completely absorbed. Continue adding broth mixture in 1/2-cup increments, stirring frequently and adding more broth only after previous addition is absorbed. Taste after 15 minutes of cooking; continue cooking until rice is firm but not chalky or chewy in center of grain. Remove from heat.

Stir in spinach, tomatoes, apple, and butter; season with salt.

Combine coconut, cumin, coriander, ground ginger, and cloves for optional tofu in a small bowl. Dredge tofu slices in coconut-spice mixture until coated.

Sauté tofu in 2 Tbsp. oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until lightly browned, about 3–5 minutes per side.

Per 1 cup risotto and 2 oz. tofu: 352 cal; 22g total fat (7g sat); 5mg chol; 29g carb; 202mg sodium; 3g fiber; 9g protein



TOFU

This Kitchen chameleon is a vegetarian favorite because it's so versatile. Tofu is a soybean curd that can be used as a meat stand-in on the grill, in the sauté pan, under the broiler, or as a protein-boosters in smoothies, desserts, spreads, and dips. Find it in aseptic packing or tubs with water in the produce or organic section of the supermarket. Tofu ranges in texture from silken (soft and nearly liquid) to cakes or pillows that can be easily sliced with a knife.



Add more hot liquid to the risotto only after a spoon swiped through the rice leaves clear trails—an indication the liquid has been fully absorbed.



To press tofu, first blot the surface with a towel to remove liquid, then place tofu on a towel-lined plate. Top tofu with another towel and an additional plate. Weigh it down with the heaviest can you have in your pantry. Place weighted tofu in the fridge for two to 24 hours.

MYTH > PLANT-BASED DIETS ARE PROTEIN-DEFICIENT.

Americans eat twice the amount of protein recommended by the USDA. But a variety of plants, grains, legumes, and fruits eaten over the course of the day contain enough plant proteins and amino acids to provide all the protein needed. Even the American Dietetics Association deems well-planned vegetarian diets healthful, nutritionally adequate, and beneficial in the prevention and treatment of some diseases.



try some dim sum

These elegant, exotic dumplings—each in its own distinctively folded wrapper—have long been the darlings of Chinese culture.

Recipes by HALEY J. WILSON

Article by JENNIFER PHELPS

Their name means “heart’s desire” in Cantonese, and dim sum [DIHM SUHM] have a centuries-old tradition of delighting the taste buds. Beautiful packaging makes them irresistible—every dumpling comes to the table in an edible wrapper that’s been pristinely folded, pinched, or pleated to form its own classically stylish covering. Inside, Asian ingredients and seasonings combine in fillings that more than live up to dim sum’s name.

These enticing morsels first appeared on the scene at the teahouses that sprang up along the ancient Silk Road. Originally snacks for weary travelers, dim sum gradually became accepted buffet fare throughout China and Hong Kong, where restaurants often start serving a selection of dumplings and sauces as early as 5 o’clock in the morning.

In the West, dim sum shows up much later in the day, at lunch or as hors d’oeuvres. Although few Western cooks attempt these beauties at home, we’ll show you how to master all the techniques you need to create an enviable array of delectable dim sum dumplings.



Shrimp Dumplings (page 27) & Mushroom Dumplings (page 28), made with triangle fold (page 29).

The secret to pretty dim sum? Use dough that folds with ease.

Flour Dough

Purchased pot-sticker wrappers are a good substitute for this dough. Use water to seal the seams.

Makes about 30 dumplings
Total time: 70 minutes

3 cups all-purpose flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. table salt

Stir together flour, water, and salt in a bowl with a fork. Knead dough until all flour is incorporated. Divide dough into three portions; roll each portion into a ball. Cover balls with plastic wrap. Allow dough to rest about 30 minutes.

Roll out one ball of dough on a floured surface until dough is $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thick. Using a $3\frac{1}{4}$ -inch round cutter, cut dough into 8 to 10 rounds. Cover rounds with plastic wrap. Repeat to roll and cut remaining dough into rounds. Reroll dough scraps.

Shape dough circles around fillings for Beef Dumplings (page 26) or Pot Stickers (page 27), following any of the folding techniques on page 29.



A $3\frac{1}{4}$ -inch cutter makes ideal dim sum wrappers, but other sizes also work. Adjust the amount of filling accordingly.

Wheat-Starch Dough

Seal the seams tightly. Dumplings made with this dough tend to pop open during steaming.

Makes 32 dumplings
Total time: 1 hour

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups wheat starch
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tapioca flour
1 tsp. table salt
 $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups boiling water
2 tsp. peanut oil

Whisk together wheat starch, tapioca flour, and salt in a bowl. Stir in water and oil with a fork. Turn dough onto work surface that's been lightly dusted with wheat starch.

Knead dough until smooth, adding more wheat starch as necessary. Dough should be soft but not sticky.

Divide dough into fourths; roll each section into an 8-inch log. Cover logs with a moist towel to keep them from drying out. Cut each log into eight equal pieces.

Roll dough pieces, one at a time, between two pieces of parchment paper until each piece of dough forms a circle $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter.

Shape dough circles around fillings for Shrimp Dumplings (page 27) or Mushroom Dumplings (page 28), following any of the folding techniques on page 29.



Roll dough between two sheets of parchment paper to prevent it from sticking to the counter or rolling pin.



STEAMER CHOICES

Don't have a bamboo steamer? Never fear—almost every kitchen contains at least one acceptable substitute.

- The traditional method for steaming dim sum is in a bamboo steamer placed over boiling water in a wok. If you'd rather use items you already have on hand, there are two other satisfactory ways of getting the job done.
- Stainless-steel steamer inserts with handles are available for most saucepans. The water level in the saucepan should come nearly to the bottom of the steamer insert.
- Collapsible metal or plastic steamer baskets also work, although they usually don't hold as many dumplings as can be fitted into layered bamboo steamers.
- Ensure that your dumplings won't stick to the steamer by placing them on oiled squares of parchment paper, and make certain the water level doesn't reach the dumplings. Also be sure that your steamer or pan has a secure-fitting lid to trap steam and allow your dumplings to cook properly.



Clockwise from top right: Pot Stickers, fan fold; Beef Dumpling, inverted-fan fold; Shrimp Dumplings, tortellini fold.

Dim sum is extremely versatile.

In our Test Kitchen, we chose a sampler of five dumplings. These include recipes for five flavorful fillings, three types of dough, and two dipping sauces—plus four folding techniques and a method for shaping buns.

The beef, shrimp, mushroom, and pot-sticker fillings can be used interchangeably with either the flour or the wheat-starch dough. Flour Dough, if made correctly, is easy to shape. The trick is getting the right consistency. Use only enough water to form the dough. Too much liquid, and the dough will be flimsy; not enough, and it will be difficult to seal. Wheat-Starch Dough is nearly foolproof. Just be sure to knead it enough to get rid of any visible lumps.

Beef Dumplings with scallions

Also try panfrying these dumplings using the method for Pot Stickers (page 27).

Makes about 30 dumplings; Total time: 1 hour 15 minutes

- 10 oz. ground beef sirloin
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 1½ tsp. soy sauce
- 1½ tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp. mirin or dry sherry
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. sugar
- ¼ tsp. ground white pepper
- 30 3¼-inch circles Flour Dough (page 25)

Combine ground sirloin, scallions, cornstarch, soy sauce, oil, mirin, salt, sugar, and pepper in a bowl.

Portion filling into balls using a No. 100 scoop (2 tsp. filling). Place balls on a baking sheet; cover

and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Shape dough circles around chilled filling following any of the folding techniques on page 29. Place filled dumplings on a floured baking sheet. (Filled dumplings may be frozen for up to 1 month.)

Bring a large pot of salted water to boiling. Drop dumplings into water one at a time; stir to prevent sticking. Return water to boil; cook dumplings until they float to surface, about 6 minutes (7–8 minutes if dumplings are frozen).

Remove dumplings with a wire strainer; arrange them on a platter.

Per dumpling: 55 cal; 1g total fat (0g sat); 5mg chol; 9g carb; 124mg sodium; 0g fiber; 3g protein



Shrimp Dumplings with bamboo shoots

As these dumplings steam, the dough becomes transparent—revealing the beautiful pink shrimp inside.

Makes about 32 dumplings
Total time: 1 hour 45 minutes

- 10 oz. shrimp, peeled, deveined, and chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped bamboo shoots
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 Tbsp. mirin or dry sherry
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- 2 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. ground white pepper
- 32 3 1/4-inch circles Wheat-Starch Dough (page 25)
- Peanut oil

Mince shrimp and bamboo in a mini food processor; do not purée. Transfer mixture to a bowl. Stir in cornstarch, mirin, soy sauce, oil, salt, and pepper.

Portion filling into balls using a No. 100 scoop (2 tsp. filling). Place balls on a baking sheet; cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Brush 32 two-inch squares of parchment paper with peanut oil.

Shape dough circles around chilled filling following any of the folding techniques on page 29. Place filled dumplings on prepared parchment squares; arrange them in a steamer.

Steam dumplings over high heat for 6–7 minutes. Remove them from steamer and arrange on a platter. (Steamed dumplings may be frozen for up to 1 month. Thaw frozen dumplings about 1 hour on an oiled baking sheet at room temperature before steaming for 4–5 minutes to warm through.)

Per dumpling: 50 cal; 1g total fat (0g sat); 14mg chol; 8g carb; 119mg sodium; 0g fiber; 2g protein

Pot Stickers

Makes about 30 dumplings
Total time: 2 hours

- 8 oz. finely shredded napa cabbage (about 3 cups)
- 1 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 8 oz. ground pork
- 2 Tbsp. minced fresh gingerroot
- 1 scallion, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp. soy sauce
- 2 tsp. mirin or dry sherry
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. sesame oil, divided
- 30 3 1/4-inch circles Flour Dough (page 25)

Toss cabbage with 1 Tbsp. salt; let mixture sit for 30 minutes. Rinse and squeeze cabbage dry. Combine with pork, gingerroot, scallion, soy sauce, mirin, 1 tsp. salt, and sugar in a bowl.

Portion filling into balls using a No. 100 scoop (2 tsp. filling). Place balls on a baking sheet; cover, and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Shape dough circles around chilled filling following any of the folding techniques on page 29. Place filled dumplings on a floured baking sheet. (Filled dumplings may be frozen for up to 1 month.)

Heat 1 Tbsp. oil in a sauté pan over high heat. Place half of dumplings in pan. Reduce heat to medium.

Pan fry dumplings about 3 minutes. Carefully add 1/4 cup water, cover pan, and reduce heat to low. Steam dumplings for 6 minutes. Uncover pan, raise heat to medium-high, and cook until bottoms are crisp, about 3 minutes. Repeat pan-frying with remaining dumplings, 1 Tbsp. oil, and another 1/4 cup water. (To cook frozen dumplings, do not thaw.

Follow pan-frying instructions, then steam dumplings 7–8 minutes instead of 6. Pan fry until dumplings are crisp, about 3 minutes.)

Remove dumplings from pan and arrange them on a platter.

Per dumpling: 67 cal; 2g total fat (1g sat); 5mg chol; 9g carb; 323mg sodium; 0g fiber; 3g protein

dipping sauces

Sauces are an important part of the dining experience at dim sum restaurants. Either of these two sauces will brighten the flavor of any of the dumplings. Don't be afraid to try mixing the sauces.

Chile Garlic Oil

Makes 1/2 cup
Total time: 5 minutes

- 1/2 cup peanut oil
- 6 dried red chile peppers, crushed
- 1 garlic clove, peeled

Heat oil, chiles, and garlic in a small saucepan over medium-low heat until garlic begins to brown. Transfer oil to a small bowl. Store oil, covered, in the refrigerator. Let dipping oil come to room temperature before using.

Per tsp.: 42 cal; 5g total fat (1g sat); 0mg chol; 0g carb; 0mg sodium; 0g fiber; 0g protein

Soy Sesame Dipping Sauce

Makes 1/2 cup
Total time: 5 minutes

- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. water
- 1 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 tsp. sesame oil
- 1 Tbsp. thinly sliced scallions

Heat soy sauce, vinegar, water, sugar, and oil in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisking to dissolve sugar. Transfer dipping sauce to a small bowl. Garnish sauce with scallions.

Per Tbsp.: 8 cal; 0g total fat; 0mg chol; 1g carb; 288mg sodium; 0g fiber; 1g protein

When you mix and match these fillings and doughs, be sure to follow the cooking directions for the type of dough you're using—and not for the filling. If you want to make shrimp pot stickers, for example, just swap the filling for Shrimp Dumplings with Bamboo Shoots (page 27) for the pork filling given in the Pot Sticker recipe (page 27). Then follow the instructions given for panfrying Pot Stickers. To make shaping go more smoothly, portion and chill your fillings beforehand. Pot Stickers usually are folded into the classic fan shape shown on page 29.



Mushroom Dumplings,
inverted-fan fold

Mushroom Dumplings

If you can't find the mushrooms listed, you can use all button mushrooms for a milder flavor.

Makes about 32 dumplings
Total time: 2 hours

- 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp. oyster sauce
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tsp. mirin or dry sherry
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground white pepper
- 4 oz. each crimini, oyster, and shiitake mushrooms (shiitake stems removed), finely chopped
- 3 scallions, finely sliced
- 3 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 Tbsp. peanut oil
- 32 $3\frac{1}{4}$ -inch circles Wheat-Starch Dough (page 25)
- Peanut oil

Whisk together soy sauce, oyster sauce, cornstarch, mirin, sugar, and pepper in a small bowl. Set aside.

Sauté mushrooms, scallions, and cilantro in 1 Tbsp. peanut oil in a large sauté pan over high heat until the moisture evaporates, 7–8 minutes. Reduce heat to medium.

Add soy sauce mixture; cook until filling thickens, about 1 minute.

Portion filling into balls using a No. 100 scoop (2 tsp. filling). Place balls on a baking sheet; cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Brush 32 two-inch squares of parchment paper with peanut oil.

Shape dough circles around chilled filling following any of the folding techniques on page 29.

Place filled dumplings on parchment squares; arrange them in a steamer. Steam dumplings over high heat for 6–7 minutes. Remove them from steamer and arrange on a platter. (Steamed dumplings may be frozen for up to 1 month. Thaw frozen dumplings about 1 hour on an oiled baking sheet at room temperature before steaming for 4–5 minutes to warm through.)

Per dumpling: 45 cal; 1g total fat (0g sat); 0mg chol; 9g carb; 147mg sodium; 0g fiber; 0g protein

folding techniques for dim sum dumplings

fan fold: Five pleats are traditional for pot stickers, but once you begin to feel confident about your shaping skills, you may wish to add more. 1) Use your fingers to fold pleats. With one hand hold the finished pleats in place, and use your other hand to form new pleats. Pleats should not overlap. Place filling in the pocket formed by the dough. 2) Seal the filled dumpling by pressing together its pleated and unpleated edges. You may need to slightly stretch the pocket that holds the filling in order to seal the dumpling.



triangle fold: When properly shaped, these dumplings resemble tiny tri-cornered hats. 1) To form dumplings, place filling in the center of a 3 1/4-inch circle of dough. Lightly pinch edges of dough to divide circumference of circle into thirds (at 12 o'clock, 4 o'clock, and 8 o'clock positions). Using your fingers, bring rounded edges of the dough together, encasing filling and creating three equal sides. 2) Use your fingers to firmly press the open rounded edges together to seal the dumplings.



inverted fan: These dumplings employ the same folding technique used in fan-shaped dim sum. 1) Using your fingers, fold a single pleat in a round of dough. Repeat the procedure, placing the second pleat next to the first, but folding it in the opposite direction to form an inverted pleat on the outside of the dumpling (a box pleat will form on the inside). Fold one more pleat beside each of the first two pleats. 2) Place filling in the pocket formed by the dough. Seal the filled dim sum by pressing together its pleated and unpleated edges. You may need to slightly stretch the pocket that holds the filling.



tortellini fold: This is the same shape used for Italian filled pasta. 1) To form Chinese dumplings, place filling on a 3 1/4-inch round of dough. Using your fingers, fold the dough in half over the filling to create a crescent shape. Seal the dumpling by pressing together its rounded edges. 2) With the rounded side of the dumpling facing away from you, grasp the two ends of the crescent and gently bend them inward toward you. Place one end over the other, forming a circular shape. Firmly press the ends together to seal.



dim sum

With soft, white dough cracking open at the top to reveal their flavorful and juicy filling, Barbecued Pork Buns are among the most recognizable of Chinese dumplings. Yeast-risen, steamed dough gives these dim sum their unique character.

All of the dumplings as well as the Barbecued Pork Buns in this story can be shaped up to one day ahead of when you plan to serve them. Store shaped dim sum, covered, in the refrigerator until you're ready to cook them.

You also can freeze dim sum on trays, then transfer them to resealable freezer bags. For best results, dumplings made with Flour Dough should be frozen before being cooked. Dumplings made with Wheat-Starch Dough should first be steamed and cooled before being frozen. The Barbecued Pork Buns should be filled and frozen, then steamed.



Bun Dough

Cake flour creates a delicate dumpling that can rise with ease when steamed.

Makes 24 buns

Total time: 2 hours 30 minutes

FOR THE STARTER—

- 1 cup warm water (105° -110°)
- 2 tsp. active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups cake flour

FOR THE DOUGH—

- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. table salt
- 1 Tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable shortening

Grease a large bowl with vegetable shortening.

Stir together water, yeast, and sugar for the starter in another

large bowl. Proof mixture by letting it rest in a warm place until it's bubbly, about 10 minutes. Stir in the 1 1/2 cups cake flour. Cover starter; let it rise in a warm place until it's bubbly, about 1 hour.

Whisk together 1 cup cake flour, all-purpose flour, baking powder, and salt for the dough. Stir flour mixture and vinegar into starter; work in 1 Tbsp. shortening with your hands.

Knead dough on a lightly floured surface until it's smooth, about 5 minutes, adding more cake flour as necessary. Place dough in prepared bowl, cover, and let it rise about 1 hour. Punch down dough. Cut dough into 24 equal pieces. Using your fingers, pat each piece of dough into a 3 1/4-inch circle.

Shape dough circles around filling for Barbecued Pork Buns (*page 31*), following instructions in recipe.



Knead dough until it's smooth and soft. This develops gluten, which helps the buns rise when they're exposed to steam.

Barbecued Pork Buns

Makes 24 buns; Total time: 2 hours 15 minutes

- 1 lb. pork tenderloin, cut into 1/2x3-inch strips
- 1/4 cup each hoisin sauce, ketchup, soy sauce, minced fresh gingerroot, and orange juice
- 2 Tbsp. mirin or dry sherry
- 2 Tbsp. oyster sauce
- 2 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 tsp. each red pepper flakes and minced orange zest
- 1/4 cup honey
- 3 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 Tbsp. water
- 24 3 1/4-inch circles Bun Dough (page 30)
- Peanut oil

Combine pork, hoisin sauce, ketchup, soy sauce, gingerroot, orange juice, mirin, oyster sauce, oil, pepper flakes, and zest in a saucepan. Simmer over medium-low heat for 12 minutes. Turn off heat. Remove, shred, and chop pork; set it aside. **Stir** together honey, cornstarch, and water in a bowl; add to sauce in pan. Bring sauce to a simmer; cook until it thickens, about 2 minutes. Add pork; cool mixture to room temperature.

Brush 24 two-inch squares of parchment paper with peanut oil. Place 2 Tbsp. filling in center of dough circle. Bring edges of dough over filling; pinch to seal. Place buns on parchment squares. (Filled buns may be frozen for up to 1 month.)

Arrange buns in steamer; let rise 30 minutes off heat. (Thaw frozen buns in refrigerator.) Steam buns in batches over high heat for 12 minutes. Remove buns from steamer; arrange on a platter.

Per bun: 160 cal; 3g total fat (1g sat); 18mg chol; 25g carb; 526g sodium; 0g fiber; 8g protein



Place filling in center of a circle of Bun Dough; bring edges of dough together over filling. Pinch tops of buns to seal.

asian pantry

Many dim sum ingredients have become mainstream and can be found in your local grocery store. Visit an Asian market for difficult-to-locate items.



produce: Napa cabbage is tender and mild-tasting; you can substitute bok choy or green cabbage. A variety of fresh mushrooms—crimini, oyster, and shiitake—are used in Chinese cooking. Each has unique flavor and texture, but they can be used interchangeably. Fresh gingerroot is commonly used in all Asian dishes. Ground ginger is not a suitable substitute for fresh gingerroot. Fresh bamboo shoots can be found in larger markets, but the canned variety are an acceptable substitute.



flours & starches: Tapioca flour (also called tapioca starch), wheat starch, and cornstarch are extracted respectively from the cassava root, wheat berry, and corn kernel. Often used as thickeners, these starches have different purposes in dim sum recipes. Tapioca flour and wheat starch combine to form an elastic, sticky dough that seals easily. Cornstarch is used to bind dim sum fillings.



oils: Light-colored sesame oil is the type usually found in grocery stores; look for darker sesame oil in Asian markets. The light oil is ideal for salad dressings. It has a high smoke point, making it also good for sautéing and frying. Darker oil, labeled "toasted sesame oil," is made by pressing sesame seeds that have first been toasted. It has a more pronounced nutty flavor and gives a characteristic taste to many Asian dishes. It isn't used for sautéing because of its tendency to burn.



saucers: Soy sauce, made from fermented soy beans, is the most common condiment in China. It makes an appearance in dipping sauces, and it flavors hundreds of dishes. Oyster sauce, a thick, caramel-colored sauce with a concentrated briny oyster flavor, imparts richness and enhances the flavors of any dish in which it's used. Mirin is a sweet, golden rice wine, usually low in alcohol. It adds a light tartness to many Asian dishes.

french crêpes

Escoffier, the Master French chef, offered eight crêpe recipes—all desserts—in his 1903 cookbook, *'Guide Culinaire.'* Throughout France, crêpes suzette still are adored in crêperies and cafes, yet new culinarians also serve savory crêpes as entrées. The brunch or lunch crêpe now is featured on American-French restaurant menus.

By KIM SAMUELSON



Think of crêpes as paper-thin pancakes. They're as easy to make as any Saturday morning flapjacks but do require a slightly lighter hand so as not to tear the tender cake. Letting the batter rest at least one hour relaxes gluten in the flour, making the crêpes more tender. For overnight chilling, we prefer cooking oil for the batter since it doesn't solidify like butter. Fillingwise, anything goes, but for springtime lunch or brunch, a filling of smoked salmon or ham and asparagus is especially welcome.

Basic Crêpes

For best results, whisk the batter anew before cooking each crêpe.

Makes about 10 crêpes; Total time:
10 minutes + chilling + cooking

- 2 eggs
- 1 1/4 cups milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil or melted unsalted butter
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt

Combine eggs, milk, flour, oil, and salt in a large bowl using a hand mixer on low speed. Scrape sides of bowl and mix on high until ingredients are thoroughly combined, about 10 seconds. Cover batter and chill at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

Heat a 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat for 2–3 minutes. Spray bottom and sides of skillet with nonstick spray. Measure 1/4 cup of batter; pour it to the side of the skillet. Immediately swirl skillet to coat bottom.

Cook crêpe until edges begin to brown, about 1 minute. Loosen crêpe around edge with a heat-proof spatula. Gently pick up crêpe with your fingers, and flip it. Cook 20–30 seconds. Transfer crêpe to a wire rack to cool. Continue cooking crêpes, coating pan with nonstick spray for each one.

Per crêpe: 90 cal; 4g total fat (1g sat); 37mg chol; 11g carb; 88mg sodium; 0g fiber; 4g protein



1) Scrape sides of the bowl to incorporate all of the flour, then mix batter on high until it's the consistency of heavy cream.



2) Be sure skillet is sizzling hot. Then pour crêpe batter to the side of the skillet using a 1/4-cup measure or a 2-ounce ladle.



3) Immediately tilt and swirl the skillet to spread crêpe batter over bottom of skillet. You can fill any holes with more batter.



4) Cook the crêpe until its edges brown slightly. Loosen crêpe using a spatula and your fingers, then flip it to finish cooking.

Test Kitchen Note

HOW TO STORE CRÊPES

- Once crêpes have cooled, stack them between pieces of parchment or waxed paper.
- Wrap them in plastic and store in a resealable plastic bag in the refrigerator for several days or in the freezer for up to two months.
- Completely thaw frozen crêpes before carefully pulling them apart.



CHERRY TOMATO SALAD

For most vibrant color, make this at the last minute.

Whisk together 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar, 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, 2 tsp. capers, 1 tsp. minced shallots, 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard, and kosher salt and pepper to taste. Toss with 2 cups halved fresh cherry tomatoes.

Smoked Salmon Crêpes with herbed cheese & fresh spinach

These terrific-tasting crêpes and filling can be made ahead of time, then assembled just before serving for an effortless brunch or luncheon.

Makes 8 crêpes; Total time: 40 minutes + crêpe-making

FOR THE FILLING—

- 8 oz. neufchatel cheese, softened
- 3 Tbsp. each minced fresh chives and dill
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. sour cream
- 1 tsp. minced lemon zest
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

TO SERVE—

- 8 prepared crêpes (page 33)
- 8 oz. smoked salmon
- 2 oz. fresh baby spinach

Blend cheese, chives, dill, lemon juice, sour cream, zest, and pepper in a bowl using a hand mixer.

Spread 2 Tbsp. cheese filling onto half of each crêpe. Top with 1 oz. salmon, then 2 or 3 spinach leaves. Fold bottom half of crêpe up, then carefully fold again to make a triangle shape. Repeat with remaining crêpes. Serve crêpes with Cherry Tomato Salad.

Per crêpe with 2 Tbsp. filling and 1 oz. salmon: 204 cal; 12g total fat (5g sat); 66mg chol; 13g carb; 436mg sodium; 1g fiber; 12g protein



Spread 2 Tbsp. cheese filling over one half of each crêpe. An offset spatula works well for doing this. Top crêpe with salmon.

Ham, Asparagus & Swiss Cheese Crêpes with mustard sauce

These crêpes can be filled, covered with plastic wrap, and chilled for 2 to 3 hours. When ready to serve, make the sauce while the crêpes bake.

Makes 10 crêpes and 2 cups sauce; Total time: 30 minutes

FOR THE CRÊPES—

- 8 oz. cooked ham, chopped
- 1 cup shredded Swiss cheese
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 1 lb. fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and cut in half
- 10 prepared crêpes (page 33)

FOR THE SAUCE—

- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup stone-ground mustard
- Kosher salt and pepper
- Chopped fresh chives

Preheat oven to 400°. Coat a baking sheet with nonstick spray. **Combine** ham, Swiss, and pepper in a bowl. Place 1/4 cup ham mixture and 4 asparagus halves down the center of each crêpe; roll.

Arrange crêpes seam side down on prepared baking sheet. (If crêpes have been made ahead, remove plastic wrap before baking.) Bake crêpes until cheese has melted, 15–20 minutes.

Melt butter for the sauce in a saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour; cook about 1 minute. Whisk in broth and milk; bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer sauce for 3 minutes. Whisk in mustard, salt, and pepper; simmer to heat through. Serve crêpes with sauce; garnish with chives.

Per crêpe with 3 Tbsp. sauce: 271 cal; 16g total fat (7g sat); 81mg chol; 17g carb; 280mg sodium; 2g fiber; 15g protein

FRESH FRUIT WITH LIME GASTRIQUE

The sweetness of this fruit side dish complements the warm, mustard-flavored crêpe sauce.

Whisk together 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice and 1 Tbsp. sugar in a small bowl. Combine 1 cup each fresh sliced kiwi, mango, banana, and strawberries in a large bowl. Toss fruit with lime-sugar sauce; let stand 15 minutes before serving.



Spread 1/4 cup ham mixture down the center of each crêpe; add asparagus spears. Roll crêpes to enclose filling.



Simmer sauce for 3 minutes to thicken. Whisk in mustard and seasonings; simmer a few minutes more to heat sauce through.

portable power

Ready, set...mix, beat, or whip. New hand-held electric mixers power up better than ever for making our soufflés and crêpes (and much more).

By NANCY BYAL and JAN TURNER HAZARD

We can be thankful that the kitchen tools used for whipping have dramatically improved over time. Long gone are the sheaves of straw tied together in a bundle that were used in centuries past for whipping egg whites. Today, hand-held electric mixers rule.

As stand mixers have turned larger and more powerful in recent years, so too have hand-held or portable mixers. Many of the new hand-held models on the market provide more efficient motors, come with multiple attachments, and are easier to handle because they weigh less. Unlike their mega sisters, the professional stand mixers, hand-helds also are more versatile. They easily move along with you around the kitchen, from counter to stovetop, and they work with a variety of bowls or saucepans. Another plus: You can conveniently stow them away in a cabinet or drawer. Kitchen-tested and approved for power, ease, and comfort, the models on these pages are our favorites.

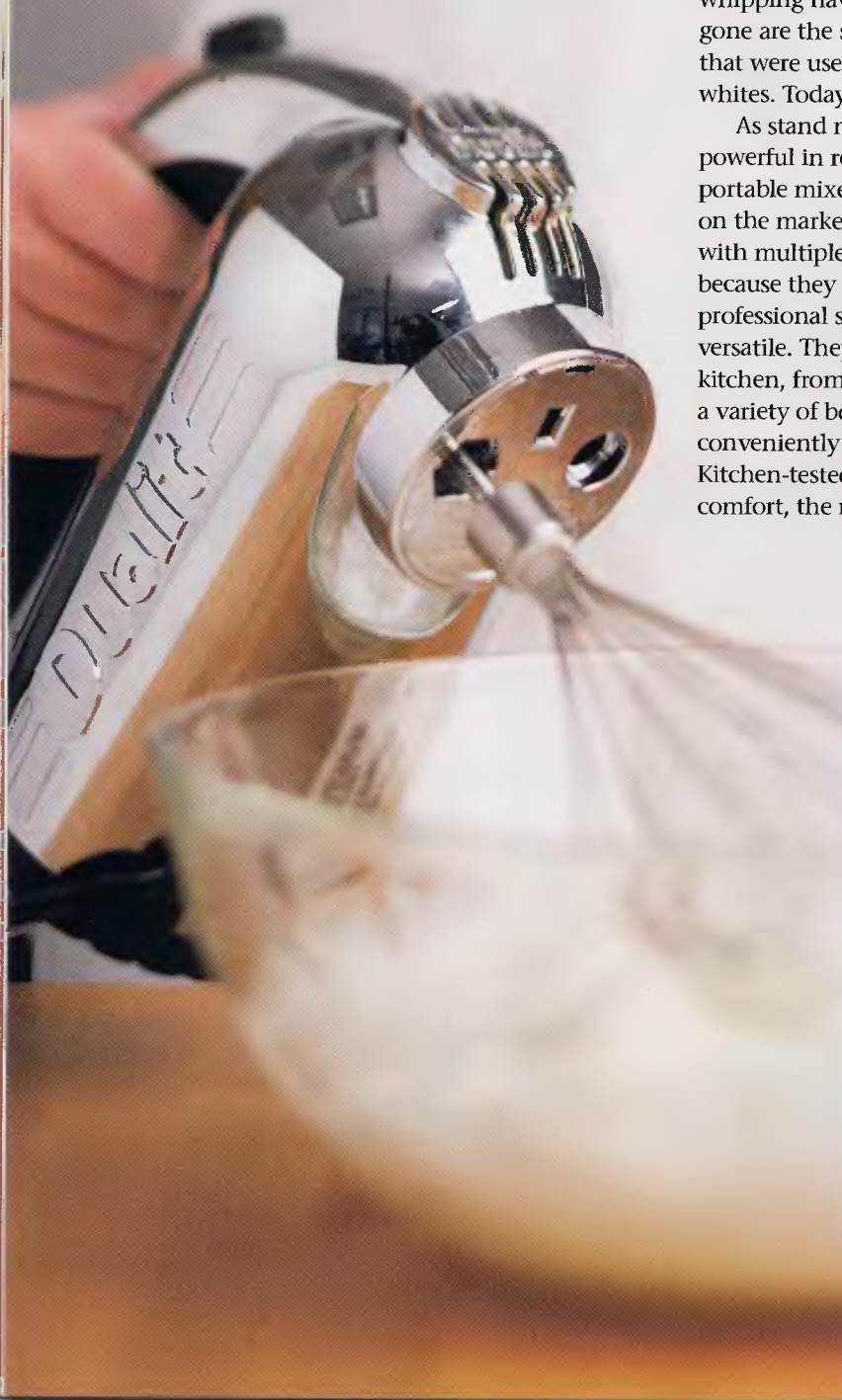
Dualit Professional 5-Speed Hand Mixer

The polished-chrome retro design of this mixer belies its commercially rated motor and professional-level performance.

PERFORMANCE: This high-performing, 240-watt mixer feels a bit heavy but works so fast you don't have to hold it for long. In the *Cuisine Test Kitchen* the editors found the extra-long beater shaft whizzes through heavy batters and helps keep dough from riding up the beater stems.

FEATURES: The exterior chrome-plated hard plastic housing sports a comfortable handle. Three sets of attachments are included: a set of oversized flat beaters, a set of dough hooks, and one wire whisk. An ejector button provides convenient attachment release. The retractable power cord stows neatly in the rear cap end. Beaters and whisk attachments are dishwasher-safe.

VITAL STATS: Model 88520; weighs 3.6 pounds; suggested retail: \$80.





Oster Inspire Hand Mixer

Multi-speed controls, a power booster, and low price combine to make this mixer the best value of the trio.

PERFORMANCE: This 250-watt machine comes with six speeds and a thumb-operated control for mixing versatility. Of all mixers tested in the Test Kitchen, this one is heaviest, took the longest to whip egg whites to stiff peaks, and had more difficulty beating thick batters, but considering the price those things are easy to forgive. A helpful power-burst button provides extra mixing power when you need it.

FEATURES: The plastic housing has a clean line with a closed-handle design and a soft-grip underside. The on/off button also doubles as the beater-eject button when in the off position. Five kinds of attachments—dough hooks, chrome beaters, cookie cutters, whisks, and a drink-mixing rod—offer creative mixing. The power cord is shorter than on other models, somewhat restricting use, but it's retractable for storage.

VITAL STATS: Model 2534; weighs about 4 pounds; suggested retail: \$33.



Weil by Spring 10-Speed Hand Mixer

Developed in cooperation with natural-health leader Dr. Andrew Weil, this mixer blends style with performance.

PERFORMANCE: Test Kitchen staff described this mixer as "incredible" for its fast and superior beating capability. The motor didn't fade no matter how many eggs were beaten. This substantial hand-held mixer offers 10 variable-speed settings (more than you really need) and the burst-of-power button comes in handy when you want a little extra oomph.

FEATURES: Comes with two sets of attachments: thin beaters and dough hooks. The handle is comfortable to hold, and the cord retracts automatically into the mixer for easy storage. Available only in chromated brushed stainless, which is a two-layer plastic that looks like metal but cleans easily. All after-tax profits from sales of the Weil by Spring Collection are donated to the Weil Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that supports integrative medicine.

VITAL STATS: Weighs 2.5 pounds; suggested retail: \$100.



HAND/STAND COMBO

Returning to a kitchen near you is the combination hand-held and stand electric mixer, a throwback to the 1950s and '60s. Not as big or heavy as professional stand mixers, the head (motor) can be detached from the base for mixing by hand. Its overall size is well suited for countertop storage. Cuisinart and Hamilton Beach offer hand/stand models.

Shown above: Cuisinart HSM-70 Power Advantage Hand/Stand; \$100.



HAND POWER: CONSIDER THE EGGBEATER

Prefer to go low-tech, low-cost with your mixing equipment? The original green mixing machine of yore, with no carbon footprint, is the hand-held rotary eggbeater.

Grandma had this gadget in her kitchen. The only power it uses is you turning the crank handle. Just remember, the eggbeater has limits. It's great for whipping

whole or separated eggs, heavy cream, or mashed potatoes but can't handle thick cookie doughs or bread batters.

Good quality eggbeaters offer

smooth operating gears and stainless-steel beaters, and are dishwasher-safe. Prices range from \$10 to \$20. Look at chefscatalog.com or cookswares.com.

soufflé sampler

Try these everyday soufflés for any meal—breakfast, lunch, dinner, even dessert. Over-the-top results are easier than you might think. Most of all, relax and know that everything that rises must fall. With soufflés, you can only delay the inevitable.

By JOHN KIRKPATRICK



Approach soufflés as you would any new recipe, and you'll see that they're not a big boogeyman. Read through the recipe, gather your ingredients, and consider the timing. Although the ingredients change, the basic steps are the same for all three of these airy specialties.

BLT (Bacon, Leek & Tomato) Soufflé with white cheddar cheese sauce

Make the cheese sauce while the soufflé bakes. Using an aged sharp Cheddar will result in the smoothest cheese sauce.

Makes 2 servings; Total time: 1 hour

FOR THE SOUFFLÉ—

- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 1/4 cup panko bread crumbs
- 2 strips thick-sliced bacon, minced
- 1/2 cup minced leeks
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1/2 cup seeded, diced tomato
- 2 room-temperature egg yolks
- Pepper to taste
- 3 room-temperature egg whites
- 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar
- Pinch of table salt
- 2 tsp. snipped fresh chives

FOR THE CHEESE SAUCE—

- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp white Cheddar cheese
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

Preheat oven to 375°. Coat a 1 qt. soufflé dish with 1 Tbsp. melted butter. Add panko, turning to coat sides of dish.

Brown bacon in a saucepan over medium heat until it's crisp, 3–4 minutes. Pour off all but 1 Tbsp. of drippings. Add leeks; sauté until they're soft, about 2 minutes. Stir in cornstarch. Whisk milk in slowly until mixture is thickened; cook for 1 minute. Add tomato. Whisk in egg yolks one at a time. Transfer mixture to a large bowl; season soufflé base with pepper.

Beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt in a bowl with a mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. Blend a third of the whites into bacon mixture until no streaks remain; fold in remaining whites. **Fill** prepared dish with batter. Bake soufflé on a baking sheet until puffed, about 30 minutes. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick into center of soufflé. Soufflé is done if the pick comes out clean or slightly moist. While soufflé bakes, make the cheese sauce.

Melt 1 Tbsp. butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour to make a roux. Cook roux for 2 minutes, stirring often. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly. Bring mixture to a boil; cook for 3 minutes. Sprinkle in cheese, stirring until it's melted and incorporated into sauce. Season with cayenne.

To serve, using a paring knife, cut a slit in top of soufflé. Pour sauce into slit, allowing sauce to pool. Spoon out portions of soufflé; garnish each serving with chives.

Per serving: 570 cal; 32g total fat (17g sat); 286mg chol; 45g carb; 671mg sodium; 1g fiber; 25g protein



After adding crumbs to the buttered soufflé dish, turn the dish until it's evenly coated on the sides and bottom.



Off heat, whisk the egg yolks quickly into the hot soufflé base so they incorporate before they cook and curdle.



Fold egg whites by drawing the spatula through the middle and across the bottom before lifting the batter over the top.



White Bean & Spinach Soufflés with shrimp cardinale

Don't worry about over-filling the soufflé cups. The spinach and bean base makes these quite stable.

Makes 2 soufflés; Total time: 1 hour

- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 4 tsp. grated Parmesan cheese

FOR THE SHRIMP—

- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2 Tbsp. brandy
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 10 medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and with tails removed (about 6 oz.)

FOR THE SOUFFLÉS—

- 1/2 cup minced onion
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup minced fresh spinach

- 1/2 cup puréed white beans (about 3/4 cup whole beans, drained)
- 1/2 tsp. dried thyme
- 1/8 tsp. black pepper
- 2 room-temperature egg yolks
- 3 room-temperature egg whites
- 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar
- Dash of table salt
- 1 Tbsp. chopped scallions

Preheat oven to 375°. Coat two 12-oz. soufflé dishes with 1 Tbsp. melted butter. Sprinkle each dish with 2 tsp. Parmesan; turn to coat sides of dishes.

Melt 1 Tbsp. butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour to make a roux. Cook roux for 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste until blended. Gradually add cream, stirring constantly. Simmer until mixture is smooth and thick, about 1 minute. Add brandy, lemon juice, 1/4 tsp. salt, and cayenne. Simmer 1 minute. Cool 5 minutes.

Arrange raw shrimp between prepared dishes. Divide sauce and pour over shrimp.

Sauté onion and garlic for the soufflés in 1 Tbsp. butter in a large saucepan over medium heat for 2 minutes. Add spinach; stir until spinach wilts. Stir in bean purée, thyme, and pepper; cook 1 minute. Whisk in egg yolks one at a time, stirring constantly. Transfer mixture to a large bowl. Cool mixture to room temperature.

Beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and dash of salt in a bowl with a mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. Blend a third of whites into bean mixture until there are no streaks. Fold in remaining whites.

Pour batter over shrimp mixture in prepared dishes, dividing it evenly. Batter will mound in cups. Bake on a baking sheet until puffed, 30–35 minutes. Test for doneness by inserting a skewer into center of soufflé. Soufflé is done if the skewer comes out clean or slightly moist.

To serve, invert soufflés onto dinner plates; garnish each portion with scallions.

Per serving: 610 cal; 37g total fat (20g sat); 350mg chol; 34g carb; 518mg sodium; 7g fiber; 25g protein

Chocolate Almond Soufflés with white chocolate amaretto sauce

A dessert soufflé can bake while you're enjoying dinner for two.

Makes two soufflés
Total time: 45 minutes

FOR THE SOUFFLÉS—

- 2 tsp. unsalted butter, melted
- 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 2 Tbsp. slivered almonds, chopped
- 1/4 cup bittersweet chocolate chips
- 2 Tbsp. milk
- 1 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. almond paste or extract
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 tsp. cornstarch
- 2 room-temperature egg yolks
- 2 room-temperature egg whites
- 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar
- Pinch of table salt
- 1 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- Powdered sugar

FOR THE SAUCE—

- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream
- 3 oz. white chocolate, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. amaretto liqueur

Preheat oven to 375°. Coat two 6-oz. soufflé cups with melted butter. Sprinkle cups with 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar, turning to coat sides. Toast almonds in a small skillet over medium heat.

Combine chocolate, milk, 1 Tbsp. granulated sugar, almond paste, vanilla, and cornstarch in a small saucepan over medium heat, whisking until mixture is smooth and thick. Whisk in egg yolks one at a time. Transfer chocolate mixture to a large bowl. Cool mixture to room temperature.

Beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt in a bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until soft peaks form. Sprinkle in 1 Tbsp. granulated sugar and continue to beat until stiff peaks form. Whisk a

third of the whites into chocolate mixture until there are no streaks. Fold in remaining whites. **Fill** prepared cups to the top with batter. Bake on a baking sheet until soufflés are puffed, 30 minutes. Test for doneness by inserting a toothpick into the center of one soufflé. It should come out clean or slightly moist. While soufflés bake, make the white chocolate sauce.

Heat cream in a small saucepan or in a microwave-safe dish until scalded. Add white chocolate; let mixture stand for 2 minutes. Whisk together cream and white chocolate until sauce is smooth; stir in amaretto.

To serve, using a paring knife, cut a slit in top of each soufflé. Pour white chocolate sauce into slits, allowing sauce to pool. Garnish soufflés with a dusting of powdered sugar and a sprinkling of chopped toasted almonds.

Per serving: 653 cal; 39g total fat (20g sat); 245mg chol; 66g carb; 128mg sodium; 1g fiber; 13g protein



sit-down sunday dinner

Quietly classy and quickly assembled, this unassuming weekend meal brings everyone in the family to the table to celebrate even the ordinary moments in our everyday lives.

By JOHN KIRKPATRICK



DINNER MENU



SUNDAY ROAST CHICKEN
WITH LEMON ESSENCE

ROSEMARY-CRUSTED POTATOES

SNAP PEA SAUTÉ
WITH MORELS & JICAMA

STRAWBERRY SALAD
WITH PECANS & FETA CHEESE

CLASSIC CARROT CAKE

I have a wife and two teenagers, and in my home—which perhaps is like yours—in any given week we count ourselves lucky if two of us can sit down to a meal together. That's why Sunday dinner is my backstop. I make the time to relax with my loved ones. I previously used this meal as an opportunity to introduce new dishes to a captive audience. After a while I discovered that making food the focus of Sunday dinner should be a side show to the real event—"quality time" with the family. The hallmarks of this Sunday dinner are bright clear flavors, grounded in the season. Given that everything's made from scratch, it's a relatively easy meal to prepare.

The centerpiece roasted chicken is startlingly simple. It has only a few ingredients, but how the chicken is roasted makes it a triumph: The skin is golden and crisped, the breast meat still juicy, and the thighs fully cooked. It's seasoned with a subtle perfume of fresh lemon and thyme. The secret to achieving all of that lies in the way that the chicken is prepared prior to roasting.

Sunday Roast Chicken with lemon essence

Lemon juice is a natural for flavoring chicken, and it also helps to create a crispy brown skin.

Makes 6 servings; Total time: 1½ hours

- 1 whole roasting chicken (4-5 lbs.)
- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Juice of ½ a large lemon
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh or ½ tsp. dried thyme
- Kosher salt
- 1 red onion, peeled and cut into wedges
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- Assorted sprigs of rosemary, parsley, and thyme (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°. Prepare a shallow roasting pan and rack by coating with nonstick spray.

Rinse and pat dry chicken. Insert a spoon under skin to separate it from flesh on breast and drumstick. Place chicken on prepared rack in pan.

Drizzle oil and juice over chicken, rubbing to distribute. Sprinkle bird with thyme and salt. Insert juiced lemon half into cavity of chicken. Loosely tie the legs together. Place onion wedges on rack.

Roast chicken for 30 minutes; rotate pan and roast another 30 minutes. Start checking bird for doneness every 10 minutes by inserting a thermometer into the thigh. Chicken is done when temperature reaches 175° and the breast is golden brown. Let chicken rest 10 minutes before serving. Arrange onion and lemon wedges around chicken on a serving platter and garnish with fresh herb sprigs, if desired.

Per serving: 399 cal; 28g total fat (8g sat); 131mg chol; 2g carb; 123mg sodium; 0g fiber; 33g protein



Use a spoon to separate the skin from the breast. This bit of space will help make the skin crispy as the chicken roasts.



Tie the chicken legs together, leaving the drumsticks relaxed from the body. This allows heat to penetrate the joints.

TECHNIQUES FOR ROASTING CHICKEN

Following these simple common-sense tips makes for perfect chicken every time.

- First, find a shallow pan and rack for roasting (a broiler pan will do). Roasting in this array allows hot air to circulate under and around the bird in a way that deep roasting pans prevent. This exposes the slower-cooking thighs to more direct heat. Added heat lets the thighs speed up to match the quicker-cooking breast meat so both peak at about the same time. This method also allows for better browning.
- For marvelous golden crisp skin, the oven is preheated to 400 degrees, hot enough to render fat but not too hot to burn it. Loosen the skin of the bird from its flesh, providing just enough separation to heat the skin from below as well as above. Olive oil and lemon juice are

rubbed over the chicken to add flavor and make the salt and thyme stick, but they serve to brown and baste the bird as well. Stuffing the cavity with the juiced lemon steams the bird with flavor from the inside. It also doesn't hurt that the lemon makes the breast full and rounded.

- Tying the legs is cosmetic as well, but the secret is to tie them loosely. This allows air to circulate between the breast and thighs. Tying the legs tightly makes the bird look more compact and rounded, but it insulates the inside of the leg joint and prevents the leg meat from cooking as quickly as the breast.
- Finally, when the chicken is ready to go into the oven, position it so the breast faces the oven door—this way the backside of the bird gets the core heat of the oven, jump-starting the process and evening out the cooking time.

Rosemary-Crusted Potatoes

Japanese-style panko bread crumbs are becoming very common and usually can be found in the Asian section of the supermarket.

Makes 6 servings; Total time: 1 hour

- 1 1/2 lb. small red or gold potatoes, quartered
- 2 Tbsp. minced fresh or 2 tsp. dried rosemary
- 1 Tbsp. stone-ground Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup panko bread crumbs
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Coat a shallow baking dish or pan with nonstick spray.

Partially cook potatoes in boiling salted water to cover, about 10 minutes. Drain.

Mix rosemary, mustard, and oil in a bowl. Add potatoes; toss to coat. Sprinkle with panko, salt, and pepper. Place potatoes in prepared dish. Roast them 30 minutes, then stir gently. Bake until potatoes are golden brown on most surfaces, another 10–15 minutes.

Per serving: 117 cal; 5g total fat (1g sat); 0mg chol; 27g carb; 193mg sodium; 2g fiber; 4g protein



Sprinkle the Japanese-style panko bread crumbs over the mustard-and-rosemary dressed potatoes. Lightly toss the potatoes to coat so the crumbs don't get too soggy.



Strawberry Salad with pecans & feta cheese

Sweet strawberries at their seasonal peak contrast nicely with this savory and salty salad.

Makes 6 servings; Total time: 15 minutes

- 3 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 qt. strawberries, hulled and halved
- 6 cups spring mix salad greens
- 1/2 cup pecans, toasted and chopped
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh or 1/2 tsp. dried dill

Whisk together vinegar, oil, and sugar. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Toss strawberries, greens, pecans, feta, and dill with dressing.

Per serving: 159 cal; 12g total fat (2g sat); 6mg chol; 12g carb; 85mg sodium; 4g fiber; 3g protein

Snap Pea Sauté with morels & jicama

If using dried morels, soak them in hot water at least 30 minutes; add a splash of sherry if you have it. Rinse fresh or rehydrated morels to remove any grit, then pat them dry.

Makes 6 servings
Total time: 15 minutes

- 1/4** lb. fresh morel mushrooms or 2 oz. dried morels
- 2** Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 8** oz. fresh sugar snap peas, trimmed
- 1/2** cup peeled, matchstick-cut jicama
- 1/4** cup chopped scallions
- Kosher salt and pepper

Soak dried morels in hot water to cover for at least 30 minutes. Gently rinse fresh or dried morels to remove grit. Leave small morels whole, but halve or quarter large ones. Pat them dry with paper towels. (This can be done up to a day ahead; cover and chill.)

Melt butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms; sauté 2 minutes. Add peas; sauté until peas turn bright green and begin to soften, about 3 minutes. Stir in jicama and scallions; cook 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Per serving: 88 cal; 4g total fat (3g sat); 10mg chol; 9g carb; 9mg sodium; 3g fiber; 3g protein



Stringing sugar snap peas makes them less chewy. Just snap the tip with your fingers and give the tab a pull like a zipper.



Rehydrate dried morels with very hot water. Adding a little sherry will enhance the nutty flavor of the mushrooms.

Classic Carrot Cake with pineapple-cream cheese frosting

We used three 8-inch layers for our cake, but one 9×13 or three 9-inch pans work, too. Just note that you'll need less frosting for a 9×13 cake.

Makes about 12 servings; Total time: about 1 hour + cooling and frosting

FOR THE CAKE—

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. each baking soda and baking powder
- 1 tsp. chai spice blend*
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. table salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 3 cups shredded carrots
- 1/4 cup chopped pistachios
- 1/2 cup buttermilk

FOR THE FROSTING—

- 1 1/2 pkgs. cream cheese, room temperature (12 oz. total)
- 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 Tbsp. pineapple juice
- 6 1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup ground pistachios

Preheat oven to 350°. Line three 8-inch cake pans (or 9-inch) with parchment circles; coat with nonstick spray. For the 9×13 pan eliminate parchment but coat the pan with nonstick spray.

Whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, chai spice blend, cinnamon, and salt; set aside.

Cream together eggs, granulated and brown sugars, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer on high speed until mixture forms ribbons, 5–7 minutes. Slowly drizzle

in oil while continuing to mix until oil is incorporated. Stir in carrots and 1/4 cup chopped pistachios.

Fold half of flour mixture into creamed mixture. Once flour mixture is nearly incorporated, stir in buttermilk. Fold in remaining flour mixture until batter is blended.

Divide batter evenly between cake pans. Bake cakes until toothpick inserted in centers comes out clean, 35–40 minutes (45 minutes if using a 9×13 pan). Transfer cakes in pans to rack; cool 10 minutes. Remove cakes from pans and cool completely.

Beat together cream cheese, butter, and pineapple juice for frosting in a large bowl with a mixer until ingredients are combined. Mix in powdered sugar 1 cup at a time, scraping sides of bowl after each addition, until sugar is fully incorporated. Beat frosting until light and fluffy.

To frost cake, place one cake layer upside down; spread frosting to edges. Top with a cake layer and more frosting; stack final cake layer on top. Spread frosting onto sides of stacked layers until covered. Then spread frosting on top layer of cake, smooth with the sides, and garnish with ground pistachios.

* You can substitute 1/4 tsp. each ground cardamom, cloves, ginger, and nutmeg for chai spice blend.

Per serving: 710 cal; 35g total fat (12g sat); 87mg chol; 101g carb; 361mg sodium; 2g fiber; 7g protein



Keep cake texture light and prevent a soggy bottom by adding oil in a thin stream to emulsify with sugar and eggs.



Fold the dry ingredients into the batter just until blended. Over-mixing results in a cake with tunneling and a tough crumb.



Press pistachios onto the cake with your palm. To catch any stray nuts, place the cake stand on a baking sheet.

Test Kitchen Note

CAKE CLUES

A few shortcuts can save time with this cake, and no one need be the wiser, especially if you try your hand at the frosting tips.

- Shave a few minutes off prep time. Purchase preshredded carrots—but not the “juliened” or matchstick carrots, which are too thick.
- To evenly fill cake layers with frosting, use a piping bag fitted with a large straight tip. Starting at the outside edge of bottom cake layer,

pipe frosting in circles to the center. Place the next layer on top, and repeat piping. The weight from the cake evenly distributes the frosting.

- If you prefer a “cleanly” frosted cake, use an offset spatula (or knife) dipped into hot water and wiped clean to smooth out any wrinkles.



Once you've wrangled everyone to the dinner table, make the time a bit sweeter with dessert. There's no better way to end this traditional dinner than with a hearty slice of classic carrot cake. Funky add-ins seem to have become carrot cake's cross to bear, but pistachios are all the adornment this cake needs. The nuts pair well with the chai spices we've used, but you can substitute regular spices. Finally, we topped the whole thing with a thick layer of cream cheese frosting. And we didn't ignore folks who simply must have pineapple flavor in their carrot cake. There's just a splash in the frosting.

—Mary Jane Mills



crab shack delicacy

Crab fluffs are the tastiest Baltimore treat you've never heard of.

By CARLOS ACEVEDO

Given how delicious crab fluffs are, it's a surprise that they remain virtually unknown outside of Maryland (unlike the über-popular crab cake). Not to worry, though. If you want to try these treats, it's easy to fry up a batch at home.

Truly addictive crab fluffs are about two things—sweet crab meat and a crispy batter. As to the former, there's no doubt in Baltimore: Maryland blue crab is a must. If you can't get it, heave a deep sigh and settle for purchasing the best canned crab you can afford.

Partner that stellar crab with a top-notch batter. This recipe makes an airy mixture that forms a savory golden-brown crust when fried. The trick is the addition of ice-cold beer—fizz aerates the batter. (Club soda also works well.) For best results, combine the batter ingredients at the last minute and avoid over-mixing.

Serve Baltimore's "secret" crab treat at your next party, with lemon wedges and tartar sauce, and we guarantee these fluffs will be gone so fast that you'll wish you had made more of them.

Baltimore Crab Fluffs

Makes 16-18 fluffs; Total time: 45 minutes

FOR THE CRAB MIXTURE—

- 2 cans pasteurized lump crab meat (6 oz. each), drained (about 1½ lb. meat)
- ½ cup panko bread crumbs
- 2 Tbsp. minced scallions
- 1 Tbsp. grated lemon zest
- 3 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. Old Bay seasoning
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ tsp. dry mustard
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper

FOR THE BATTER—

- 2 egg yolks
- ¼ cup milk
- ¼ cup chilled beer or club soda
- 1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- Vegetable oil

Combine crab meat, panko, scallions, and zest in a bowl. In a separate bowl, stir together mayonnaise, lemon juice, ½ tsp. Old Bay seasoning, Worcestershire

sauce, mustard, and cayenne pepper. Gently fold mayonnaise mixture into crab mixture until the two are thoroughly combined. Try to avoid breaking up crab meat. **Stir** together egg yolks, milk, beer, and 1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning for the batter in a large bowl. Sift in flour and baking powder. Stir mixture with a fork until batter is just combined. (Some lumps are OK.) Heat 1 inch of vegetable oil in a medium-sized pot over medium-high heat to 360°.

Form crab mixture into balls the size of large gum balls (about one rounded Tbsp. each). Working in batches, coat crab balls with batter, then use a slotted spoon to carefully lay them into hot oil. Turn fluffs frequently until they're evenly browned, about 2 minutes. Remove fluffs to a paper-towel-lined tray.

Serve fluffs immediately, or keep them warm in a 200° oven for up to 30 minutes.

Per fluff: 102 cal; 7g total fat (1g sat); 40mg chol; 6g carb; 131mg sodium; 0g fiber; 4g protein



Use a rounded tablespoon measure to get the correct amount of filling for the crab balls, then lightly press them into shape.



Fry fluffs in small batches. Adding more than a few at a time will drop the oil's heat below 360°, resulting in greasy fluffs.

LOCAL DISH

What's your favorite local recipe?

This new feature explores the hidden gems and treasured favorites of regional American cuisine. In each article, we'll examine a unique local recipe and teach you how to duplicate it at home. Got a local favorite? Let us know! Mail it in or contact us through our e-mail address shown below. Please include your name, address, and daytime phone number in case we have questions.

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*"The smell of
good bread baking,
like the sound of lightly flowing water,
is indescribable in its evocation
of innocence and delight."*

— attributed to M.F.K. Fisher



Buttery Dinner Rolls, recipe on page 4.